

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5674

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD BY POUCH

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USMISSION GENEVA

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 1301

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT UR

SUBJECT: SOLZHENITSYN: INTERIM ASSESSMENT

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

USIA FOR IEE, IBS

1. SUMMARY: BUFFETED BY CONFLICTING PRIORITIES, THE REGIME SEEMS TO BE STILL FEELING ITS WAY IN ITS HANDLING OF SOLZHENITSYN. WE THINK THE ODDS SLIGHTLY FAVOR A CONTINUED CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT HIM AT HOME, BUT NO PUNISHMENT. IF THE REGIME ACTS, EXILE ALSO A POSSIBILITY. END SUMMARY

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2. THE REGIME IS STILL TRYING TO COPE WITH THE

DILEMMA POSED BY THE PUBLICATION IN PARIS OF GULAG ARCHIPELAGO, ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN'S DOCUMENTARY INDICTMENT OF STALINIST TERROR AND REPRESSION. THE REGIME MUST WEIGH INTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS--PRESENT-DAY IMPLICATIONS REGARDING THE KGB, THE APPREHENSION OF SOME PRESENT LEADERS WHOSE CAREERS EXTEND BACK INTO THAT MURKY PERIOD OF HISTORY, AND THE CLEAR ASSAULT ON REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE PUBLICATION OF SOVIET WORKS ABROAD--AGAINST FOREIGN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS IN DECIDING ON A COURSE OF ACTION. WITH THE FUROR CAUSED IN THE WEST BY THE EARLY AUTUMN PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST ACADEMICIAN SAKHAROV STILL FRESH IN THEIR MINDS, THE AUTHORITIES AT FIRST HELD OFF COMMENT ON SOLZHENITSYN'S CHALLENGE AND THEN BEGAN TO MOUNT A CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT HIM BEFORE THE SOVIET PUBLIC.

3. PRESS ATTACKS PORTRAYING SOLZHENITSYN AS A TRAITOR, A LOVER OF NAZIS AND OTHER ENEMIES OF THE STATE, AND AS A WEAPON IN THE HANDS OF WESTERN REACTIONAIRES WAGING WAR AGAINST DETENTE REACHED A FEVER PITCH TOWARD THE END OF THE MONTH. DESPITE THE RHETORIC, THERE HAVE BEEN AS YET NO CLEARCUT CALLS FOR PUNISHMENT OF THE AUTHOR BY IMPRISONMENT OR INTERNAL EXILE. IN RECENT DAYS, HOWEVER, THE PRESS HAS PUBLISHED AN INCREASING NUMBER OF LETTERS SUGGESTING THAT SOLZHENITSYN SHOULD LEAVE, OR PERHAPS BE FORCED TO LEAVE, THE COUNTRY. THE LATTER IS ALSO A FORMULA WHICH IS MENTIONED AS A POSSIBILITY BY OUR MOSCOW SOURCES.

4. NOT THE LEAST OF THE FACTORS INHIBITING HARSH ACTION AGAINST THE AUTHOR IS FOREIGN OPINION, A STRONG INFLUENCE AT A TIME WHEN THE SOVIETS ARE TRYING TO INCREASE OFFICIAL CONTACTS WITH THE WEST AND WHEN BREZHNEV IS STILL PURSUING HIS WORLD STATESMAN ROLE. THE FACT THAT THE REGIME HAS CHOSEN TO PURSUE SUCH POLICIE SEEMS IN ITSELF AN ADMISSION THAT WESTERN OPINION CANNOT SIMPLY BE IGNORED. IN ADDITION, THE REGIME MUST CONSIDER HOW ACTION AGAINST SOLZHENITSYN WOULD AFFECT THE FORTUNES OF NON-RULING

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COMMUNIST PARTIES, SOME OF WHICH SEEM TO BE URGING MODERATION.

5. WHILE EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS WEIGH HEAVILY, ACTION AGAINST SOLZHENITSYN CANNOT BE ENTIRELY PRECLUDED. THERE ARE FEW SIGNS AT THIS POINT THAT SOLZHENITSYN WILL RESTRAIN HIMSELF; IN FACT, HE SEEMS TO BECOME BOLDER AS THE ATTACKS INCREASE. HIS FLOUTING OF

ESTABLISHED RULES, HIS OPEN CHALLENGE TO KEY FEATURES OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM, AND THE EXAMPLE HE SETS FOR NON-CONFORMISTS OF LESSER STATURE ALL LEND WEIGHT TO THE INTERNAL SECURITY ARGUMENT WHICH EVERY SOVIET LEADER MUST CONSIDER SERIOUSLY.

6. AN ADDITIONAL AND COMPLICATING FACTOR IS THE EFFECT THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN COULD HAVE ON DOMESTIC OPINION. ORDINARY PEOPLE, WHOSE FEELINGS AGAINST SOLZHENITSYN ARE BEING WHIPPED UP BY THE CONTENT OF THE PRESS ATTACKS ON HIM, MUST WONDER WHY HE IS STILL FREE. THE REGIME MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO PAINT ITSELF INTO A CORNER WHERE THE NON-PUNISHMENT OF SOLZHENITSYN WOULD POSE MORE PROBLEMS INTERNALLY THAN WOULD HIS PUNISHMENT EXTERNALLY.

7. IT MAY WELL BE THAT THE REGIME HAS NOT YET MADE UP ITS MIND AS TO SOLZHENITSYN'S FATE AND IS TESTING THE WATER TO DETERMINE HOW FAR IT CAN OR SHOULD GO. WE THINK THE ODDS SLIGHTLY FAVOR THAT FOREIGN POLICY NEEDS WILL WIN OUT FOR THE TIME BEING AND THAT THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST SOLZHENITSYN WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD UP IN ORDER TO DISCREDIT HIM AT HOME, WHILE LEAVING THE REGIME IN A POSITION TO CLAIM TO THE REST OF THE WORLD THAT DESPITE CRITICAL "PUBLIC OPINION" IN THE USSR, HE HAS GONE UNPUNISHED. IN THE EVENT THE REGIME FEELS COMPELLED TO ACT, EXILE ABROAD WOULD SEEM THE BEST BET, ASSUMING THE MECHANICS COULD BE WORKED OUT. INTERNAL EXILE, BASED ON AN ADMINISTRATIVE RULING ABOUT HIS RESIDENCY STATUS, IS ANOTHER POSSIBILITY.DUBS

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